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Item 3 of the provisional agenda
Matters arising since the twenty-third session

Matters arising since the twenty-third session

And other International Developments

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The Secretariat will report on matters arising since the twenty-third session. This document also provides a summary of the main international developments relevant to United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) and an overview of the outreach and support activities of the Secretariat to enhance the implementation of UNECE and UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools.

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I. International developments

A. UNCTAD E-Trade Initiative

1. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) formally launched a multi-stakeholder initiative with 22 international organizations called "eTrade for All" at the E-Commerce week, in April 2017. The goal of this initiative was to support effective cooperation in delivering coordinated assistance to beneficiary countries in the area of international electronic commerce. This initiative is expected to provide direct benefits by enhancing coordination and the ability to respond in an effective and efficient way to countries' requests for support, in line with respective mandates and expertise, while preventing duplication of efforts. The United Nation Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is a partner in the initiative, which will also support the dissemination and uptake of its recommendations, standards and tools through the work of other organizations.

2. During the 2017 E-Commerce week, UNECE co-organized two sessions, "E-Commerce and Trade Logistics: New Challenges, Opportunities and Solutions for International Transport and Trade Facilitation" which was jointly organized with UNCTAD, the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). A session called "Single Window as an Enabler for E-commerce Development" was jointly organized with the African Alliance for e-Commerce. For E-Commerce week 2018 (to be held in April 2018) UNECE has been invited to contribute to sessions on blockchain and the internet of things, which are development areas of UN/CEFACT experts, who are working on new projects.

3. At its first session, in October 2017, the UNCTAD Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy, adopted policy recommendations emphasizing the need to achieve inclusive e-commerce and development gains from digitalization in line with the Goals of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. They underlined the increasing impact of information and communications technology and the digital economy on global trade, the organization of work, employment and productivity. The recommendations also referred to the importance of measuring cross-border e-commerce, and encouraged initiatives to improve the availability of data on e-commerce in developing countries, including the United Nations Regional Commissions survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade.

B. WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement

4. The entry into force of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) on 22nd February 2017 marked an important milestone in the history of the WTO and remains one of the most important international developments for the work of UN/CEFACT. The first multilateral trade agreement concluded since the WTO was established 20 years ago, has the potential to greatly reduce the regulatory and procedural time and costs of international trade, and to cut total trade costs by 14 per cent on average. This will result in massive savings of over 1 trillion USD annually to economies, the majority of which will accrue to developing economies. As of 2 February 2018, 130 countries have ratified the TFA.

5. The Agreement provides a legal framework for the implementation of many of the UNECE and UN/CEFACT recommendations, standards and tools developed over the past 50 years, all of which are freely available to Member States. It also provides a powerful boost to the political will to implement these measures and to the ability of developing countries to obtain technical assistance for their implementation.

6. Key supporting UNECE - UN/CEFACT Recommendations for the WTO TFA include:

- Recommendation No. 1 on the United Nations Layout Key;
- Revised UNECE Recommendation No. 4 on National Trade Facilitation Bodies;
- Recommendation No. 18 on Facilitation Measures related to International Trade Procedures;
- UNECE Recommendations No. 33 to No. 36 on Single Window;
- UNECE Recommendation No. 40 on Consultation Approaches; and
- Standards that can support implementation such as the Core Components Library (UN/CCL); the United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT); Code Lists and various Business Requirement Standards (BRS) and Requirements Specification Mappings (RSM).

7. In addition, the UNECE Secretariat has been active in supporting the implementation of the Agreement. Specific activities have included:

- UNECE's active role in the meetings of the Annex D+ Organizations[1], organized by the WTO to coordinate the efforts of international organizations to support to the WTO TFA implementation. In this context, UNECE co-organized—in cooperation with WTO, WCO, the World Bank Group, UNCTAD, and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)—the TFA Facility "Trade Facilitation on Track" event, during the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference;
- Participation in international workshops and meetings to demonstrate the role of UN/CEFACT in supporting the Agreement. In particular, UNECE contributed to the Meeting on Trade facilitation and Investments of the Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly, held in Marrakesh on 8-10 October 2017 to brief parliamentarians on negotiations leading to the 11th Ministerial Conference in Buenos Aires, and introduce them to the WTO TFA, its benefits and implementation requirements.

8. The main focus of international organizations and donors in the trade sector over the coming years will be to assist countries to analyse priority measures under the Agreement and to support them in their actual implementation. Coordination of such support for the WTO TFA amongst international organizations is key to ensuring efficiency of delivery and avoidance of overlaps.

9. To this end, UNECE will continue to work closely with its partners, and especially the International Trade Centre (ITC), to develop and deliver joint products and support services. During 2017, UNECE has supported the UNCTAD Empowerment Programme for National Trade Facilitation Committees (NTFCs) in Cameroon, Gabon and Benin (May and August 2017), where members of the Committee have been trained on the TFA and have

[1] On 1 August 2004, the WTO General Council adopted a Decision on the Doha Agenda work programme. Annex D to that Decision relates to the Modalities for negotiations on trade facilitation. Those Modalities recognize the importance of technical assistance and capacity building support for developing and least-developed countries to enable them to fully participate in and benefit from the negotiations. In order to make technical assistance and capacity building more effective and operational and to ensure better coherence, certain relevant international organizations have been invited to undertake a collaborative effort in this regard. The international organizations concerned are referred to as the "Annex D+ Organizations". At present the Annex D + group is comprised of the following organizations: IMF, ITC, OECD, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNIDO, WEF, WB, WCO.

been coached in the preparation of the National Trade Facilitation Implementation Roadmap, based on the UNECE Guidelines.

10. Such joint efforts will include the continued delivery of the Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) under a joint banner, as a UN tool which will incorporate tools and products from other United Nations agencies. In this context, a joint project has been started with the ITC to enhance the content of the TFIG in relation to the implementation requirements for the TFA and to develop a new itinerary on trade facilitation for SMEs, which is expected to be completed in 2018.

11. UNECE has also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Asia Pacific Council for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (AFACT) in April 2017, and the two bodies are working together to explore ways of assisting developing economies to increase efficiency, and thus enhance their competitiveness and economic development potential.

C. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

12. On 1 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development— adopted by world leaders in September 2015— officially came into force. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind (A/RES/70/1).[2] The SDGs will be a key reference point for all development actions and, particularly, those undertaken by the United Nations over the coming years, including UN/CEFACT.

13. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose implementation started in January 2016, put significant emphasis on the role that trade can play for sustainable development. The work of UN/CEFACT can directly contribute to the achievement of several SDG targets, including SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 12 on responsible production and consumption, SDG 14 on life below water, SDG 15 on life on earth, and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

14. Governments and trade are increasingly looking to traceability standards to confirm that the production, transport and distribution of goods and services is conforming with high-level policy objectives and civil society values, which directly relate to SDG 12. The UN/CEFACT agriculture expert group has already developed an international technical standard to trace important business processes in the animal and fish supply chain. UN/CEFACT is now working on a traceability framework to provide a structured approach for tracking and tracing sustainable textile value chains.

15. In this context, a brainstorming session was held during the European Union Development Days 2017 (June) in Brussels and at a conference during the 30th UN/CEFACT Forum, October 2017 in Rome, to discuss the findings of a study produced by the Secretariat, including recommendations for enhancing transparency and traceability of textile value chains. As a follow-up, the UNECE study "Transparency in textile value chains in relation to the environmental, social and human health impacts of parts, components and production processes" was published in November 2017, and the Secretariat is currently working on a joint project with ITC and the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), for a traceability framework in the garment sector. The Secretariat is also leading the

[2] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E.

organization of a Roundtable on SDG 12 during the UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on 1st March 2018, which will facilitate peer learning and experience sharing among UNECE Member States on approaches to advance the circular economy, including through transparency and traceability of global value chains.

16. Overfishing and illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing (IUU) accounts for one-fourth of the fish resources in the oceans and costs a staggering 23 billion USD. As a result, future fish stocks are at risk of depletion, ocean biodiversity is impacted and the economic security of legitimate fishery workers is at stake. This is a global challenge, to which SDG 14 (in particular target 14.4, aimed at ending overfishing and IUU) directly responds. An essential step for an effective management of fish resources is the timely acquisition of information on vessels, stocks and catches, as well as the exchange of such information between stakeholders.

17. In order to advance action to support this target, UNECE has established a Team of Specialists (ToS) on Sustainable Fisheries (EXCOM[3] 92nd meeting on 23 June 2017). The aim of the ToS is to promote and facilitate the implementation of the UN/CEFACT Fisheries Language for Universal Exchange (FLUX) standard or other sustainable fisheries data standards on a global scale. The FLUX standard is already being used in all European Union (EU) Member States, as well as in countries in other regions, including Brazil. The first session of the Team of Specialists was held on 29-30 January 2018 and the Programme of Work of the Team for 2018-2019 is proposed for endorsement by the twenty-fourth session of the UN/CEFACT Plenary.

18. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement aiming to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. It has developed an electronic version of its trade declaration using the Core Component Library of UN/CEFACT which generates an XML message according to the specifications of UN/CEFACT. The CITES declaration is used in customs clearance procedures in all countries around the globe. It allows countries to control trade in certain environmentally sensitive commodities and endangered species, and to combat illegal trade. This contributes to the achievement of specific targets under SDG 15. In 2017 CITES established a group of experts for traceability of supply chains and trade of endangered species, with whom UN/CEFACT actively collaborates.

19. At its 23rd Plenary in 2017, UN/CEFACT adopted a Recommendation on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Trade Facilitation. People-first PPPs can make a major contribution to SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals. While there has been a large body of guidance on PPPs in infrastructure generally, to date, little substantive work has been produced on PPPs in the domain of Trade Facilitation. The Recommendation outlines how PPPs can contribute to Trade Facilitation, including in non-traditional areas such as a Single Window system; a National Trade Facilitation Body; and infrastructure support for port communities, trade and transit corridors, and coordinated border management.

20. UNECE is also seeking to support SDG 5 on gender equality through its project on women and trade facilitation. The UNECE Secretariat is supporting the drafting of a white paper by a UN/CEFACT project team, whose findings were presented at an ITC Conference on Women in Trade in April 2017. In the future, this may lead to a separate project to develop a Recommendation.

[3] Executive Committee (EXCOM)

II. Outreach and support services

A. United Nations Regional Commissions Joint Approach to Trade Facilitation

21. The United Nations Regional Commissions (UNRC) have taken a joint approach to trade facilitation, which was decided in Beirut in January 2010 by the Executive Secretaries of the five Regional Commissions, and subsequently endorsed by all five Regional Commissions. In 2015 they launched a Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade. In 2017 UNECE, jointly with the other Regional Commissions, conducted the 2nd Global Survey, which covered 120 countries from the five regions of the world and whose preliminary results were presented at a joint event during the WTO Aid for Trade Global Review, held in Geneva in July 2017. The Global Report and the five Regional Reports were released in November 2017 and officially launched at the 11th WTO Ministerial Conference, during a side event on 9 December 2017.

22. According to the survey, countries are progressing on almost all fronts of trade facilitation and paperless trade. For example, the average rate of implementation of trade facilitation measures including in paperless trade for UNECE Member States is about 69 per cent, which is seven percentage points higher than in the 2015 survey. The global average stood at about 60 per cent in 2017. Most of the advanced economies have a rate of above 75 per cent, while most of the transition economies in Central Asia and Eastern Europe have an implementation rate below 60 per cent. This indicates that the countries with higher GDP tend to have higher trade facilitation implementation. The implementation rates have been calculated based on 38 indicators for genera' trade facilitation measures that are part of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) provisions, as well as some additional measures in facilitating automation and cross-border paperless trade transactions.

23. A closer look at the report shows that, in the UNECE region, the most-implemented (86 per cent) measures were related to transparency of trade procedures and access to information. The formalities category, which deals with regulatory procedures like risk management, pre-arrival processing and more, was also well implemented at a rate of 78 per cent. The Institutional arrangement category followed with 73 per cent implementation. The paperless trade (68 per cent) and cross-border paperless trade (46 per cent) categories, which primarily assesses the automation of procedures and facilitation of electronic exchange of trade data, are in need of significant improvement. Some of the least implemented measures from these categories are electronic application for customs refunds and electronic exchange of certificates of origin, or sanitary & phytosanitary conditions.

24. This year's survey included a new set of measures, which attempted to gauge the inclusiveness of trade facilitation reforms. These were trade facilitation for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, and women in trade. A limited analysis of the data received shows moderate implementation (above 60 per cent) for measures related to agriculture and SMEs but very low (17 per cent) implementation related to women in trade, which warrants greater efforts from countries.

25. Further cooperation has been undertaken with other Regional Commissions in the area of Single Window implementation. In particular:

- The UNECE Secretariat has been attending the Asia Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum (APTFF) organized by UNESCAP, since its inception in 2009. At the APTFF 2017, held in Indonesia on 5-8 September 2017, the UNECE organized a side event on sustainable fisheries and the UN/CEFACT FLUX standard;

- UNECE and UNESCAP organized a joint conference with the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) and the Lomonosov Moscow State University in December 2017. This event brought together experts and implementers from across the EEC as well as from the two Regional Commissions. UN/CEFACT recommendations and standards were referred as key implementation tools and EEC and its Member States expressed their gratitude for the UNECE's support in advancing trade facilitation and e-business in the subregion;
- The UNECE Secretariat also assisted the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) in conducting a two-day training session for the Iraqi Government on Single Window implementation. The base principles outlined within Recommendations 33, 34, 35 and 36 were explained as well as the Trade Facilitation Roadmap.

B. Cooperation with Other Regional Bodies

26. The UNECE Secretariat has been cooperating with several European Commission Directorate Generals (DGs) over the past years. In 2017, UNECE participated regularly in The Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport (DG-MOVE) Digital Transport and Logistics Forum (DTLF) sub-group workshops, studying the documentary requirements in transport and logistics and their dematerialization. DG-MOVE was invited to present their work at the 4th UNECE Single Window Conference. EU Directorate General for Taxation and the Customs Union (TAXUD) has been very supportive of the UN/CEFACT work on recommendations. EU Member States are currently studying the future direction of the European Single Window(s). The UNECE Secretariat was invited to present its ongoing work on the subject as well as the results from the 4th UNECE Single Window Conference.

27. The Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG-MARE) has been actively engaging with the work of the UNECE Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries, and has pledged a financial contribution to support the implementation of its programme of work in the biennium 2018-2019. The Secretariat is also engaging with the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG-DEVCO) on work related to traceability of sustainable garment value chains.

28. The Secretariat has been actively engaging with the EEC, with whom it has been jointly organizing the conference on Single Window implementation in Moscow in December 2017, and a series of workshops for training trade agencies on supply chain management, simplification of import and exports procedures, and single window implementation in Kyrgyzstan.

C. Electronic Business Memorandum of Understanding (ebMoU) and ISO Technical Committees

29. The Parties to the Electronic Business Memorandum of Understanding (ebMoU) signed between the UNECE, the International Standards Organization (ISO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) Committee have met in November 2017, December 2017 and January 2018. With the retirement of the chair, they have decided to slightly modify and simplify the organization of the Management Group. This new streamlined organization should take effect in December 2018. The four signatories also planned to organize punctual conferences on topics of mutual interest. The first of these should take place in September 2018, most likely on the topic of Internet of Things (IoT).

30. The UNECE Secretariat has put in place several official Category-A liaisons with ISO Technical Committees (TCs) and Project Committees (PCs) in 2017. These include ISO TC 154 (Processes, data elements and documents in commerce, industry and administration), ISO TC 204 (Intelligent Transport Systems), ISO TC 307 (Blockchain) and ISO PC 308 (Chain of Custody). This completes the Category-A liaison already established with ISO PC 245 (Cross-border trade of second-hand goods), ISO PC 295 (Audit data collection) and the Category-B liaison with ISO TC 68 (Financial services).

31. UNECE has been very active with liaison ISO TC 154. Several joint working items are maintained through this collaboration including UN/EDIFACT syntax and the United Nations Trade Data Element Dictionary (UNTDED). A request to modify the UNTDED Joint Maintenance Agency Terms of Reference was put forward and is in the process of approval. New joint working items were proposed on transport data harmonization, with the objective to align ISO business needs to the Multi Modal Transport Reference Data Model.

32. UNECE has also been very active in the ISO TC 307 on Blockchain. We have provided a good deal of implementation examples as well as technical input on their ongoing work. Despite this constructive input, ISO TC 307 has recently approved the creation of a subgroup which will duplicate work currently being finalized within UN/CEFACT.

D. Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide

33. The United Nations Trade Facilitation Implementation Guide (TFIG) is a web-based interactive knowledge management and training tool that supports countries in the implementation of trade facilitation reform. It helps public and private sector actors better navigate the wide array of existing trade facilitation instruments in order to identify possible paths for achieving their objectives. It contains information about major trade facilitation instruments and tools and links to external references and data sources from all key international organizations involved in trade facilitation. It also contains material and country case stories sharing best practices and solutions to support trade facilitation. The Guide is currently available in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish. It is a key tool to support the implementation of the WTO TFA.

34. In 2016, a TFIG Training Manual was released to complement the Guide. The manual was developed to support the implementation of workshops based on the contents of the Guide. It provides guidelines, tools and learning activities for three-day workshops on the Guide. In addition, it helps trainers to prepare for their sessions, shows them how to structure the training, and gives pedagogical and didactic guidelines for achieving the participant's learning objectives.

35. With the support of the Swedish Government (the original sponsor of the project), the Secretariat undertook a major review of TFIG. This included a complete update of all material from key organizations in the Guide and two new Itineraries (the first on how to establish a National Trade Facilitation Committee and the second on how to develop a National Trade Facilitation Roadmap) which were added to the Guide in 2016.

36. TFIG has become a major reference resource for government officials and traders around the world. At the same time, it is a core tool for trade facilitation planning and training. Since its launch in September 2012, use of the Guide has grown exponentially. In 2015, TFIG received over 6.7 million hits and over 302,000 visits. By the end of 2017, the TFIG platform received over 10.5 million hits and over 445,000 visits.

37. UNECE is currently raising funds to maintain and enhance the TFIG, to develop additional domains, itineraries and sections; to establish this tool as the central portal for information on trade facilitation in support of the implementation of the WTO TFA (thus

facilitating coordination among key players in trade facilitation) and to include in the TFIG a One United Nations inquiry point on trade facilitation for countries. A project proposal has been developed to this end for submission to potential interested donors. ITC is currently supporting the enhancement and update of the existing itinerary on the WTO TFA and the establishment of a new itinerary on trade facilitation for SMEs. These are expected to be complete by 2018.

E. Regional support

38. In 2017, the Secretariat continued to support a project entitled "Improved capacity of governmental trade control agencies in Albania to implement Single Window", implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Entrepreneurship of Albania, the Albanian Customs Administration, and UNCTAD. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of governmental trade control agencies and the business community in Albania and to simplify, harmonize and automate trade information gathering and customs operations through a Single Window. This will lead to the implementation of the first steps outlined in Recommendation 34 on Data Harmonization and Standardization: namely, to identify the documentary and data requirements of each administration for cross-border transactions.

39. In 2015 UNECE carried out a trade needs assessment in Kyrgyzstan, which identified priority intervention areas for enhancing the country's access to global value chains, including supply chain management, the facilitation of import and exports procedures and single window implementation. In 2016 the Trade Facilitation Section in cooperation with Working Party 6 on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies, launched a project aimed at developing training materials and conducting a series of training workshops for trade support institutions in order to familiarize traders and government officials with international and national trade-related regulations, policies, trends and issues. The project will be completed in 2018.

40. In October 2017, the Trade Facilitation Section, jointly with the Market Access Section, started a project to assist Tajikistan to empower their National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC) to align with the recommendations of the UNECE study on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade, and thereby enable the Government to fulfil its commitments under the WTO TFA. In 2018 the project will involve the delivery of a series of workshops (to train and coach the members of the NTFC) and the preparation a technical paper and a national action plan intended to deepen Tajikistan's integration into global value chains. The project will be implemented in close collaboration with ITC and UNCTAD.

41. In January 2018, the Trade Facilitation Section launched a three-year project, funded under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) 11th tranche, to strengthen the national capacities of selected transition economies to integrate into the international rules-based trading system. The project aims to enhance countries' exports in their respective subregions by using UNECE trade facilitation policy recommendations, standards and tools for the development of evidence-based policy to support implementation of the provisions of the WTO TFA directly related to the expertise and experience of UNECE, and the instruments of UN/CEFACT—notably TFA articles 23.2 (national trade facilitation committees); 10.1 (streamlining documentary formalities); 10.3 (use of international standards); and 10.4 (Single Window). The project will focus on selected countries with economies in transition (one from each of the following subregions): Southeast Europe, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (e.g., but not necessarily, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Georgia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

42. Finally, the Trade Facilitation Section is commencing activities under a Russian funded project to strengthen the capacity of Central Asian countries to implement trade facilitation measures and better integrate into the international rules-based trading system. The project aims to enhance the capacity of policymakers and experts in national trade facilitation bodies, regulatory agencies and other relevant stakeholders, to develop and implement trade facilitation policies and measures (notably in the area of WTO TFA in which UNECE has valuable expertise), to improve their capacity to measure progress in the implementation of trade facilitation, and to achieve internal and cross-border policy coherence for the simplification and harmonization of trade procedures. The project is expected to be complete by December 2019.

F. Regional advisory services in 2017-2018

43. In 2017-2018, the Regional Adviser continued to manage projects and activities supporting countries' efforts to implement trade facilitation, notably, the recommendations and standards of UNECE.

44. In light of the entry into force of the WTO TFA, a number of advisory and training activities were organized with a view to help transition economies implement trade facilitation measures, notably those in the TFA. In mid-2017 a UNECE-led TFA readiness assessment of Azerbaijan to implement the TFA was finalized, and in July 2017 the WTO Working Party on Azerbaijan's WTO accession held a meeting in Geneva to consider the results. The objective was to better negotiate Azerbaijan's accession to the WTO. UNECE and Azerbaijan plan to hold a seminar in 2018 to discuss the follow-up to the report, possible support for the establishment of a national trade facilitation committee and a workplan to implement remaining TFA measures.

45. In cooperation with UNCTAD, the Regional Adviser contributed to the training of Senegal's National Trade Facilitation Committee on the implementation of the TFA (Dakar, 20-24 July 2017).

46. UNECE continued its support for Ukraine based on the findings of Ukraine's WTO TFA readiness assessment and lessons learned from a pilot Port Community System project in Odessa. Several meetings and consultations in 2017, notably the annual UNECE Odessa seminar on 1 June 2017, focused on streamlining regulatory information flows and alignment with international standards for agricultural exports—a strategic sector for the Ukrainian economy. On 21 September 2017, UNECE and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Organization co-organized a seminar on Single Window interoperability (promoting the new UN/CEFACT Recommendation 36 on Single Window interoperability). The text of the regional BSEC Trade Facilitation Strategy, developed with support from UNECE, was finally completed, yet one of the BSEC Member States held its adoption back for political reasons.

47. Following up on the UNECE Russian-funded project on trade facilitation and the Single Window for Member States of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Regional Adviser co-organized with the Eurasian Economic Commission and ESCAP a seminar on Single Window interoperability at the Moscow University Lomonosov on 7-8 December 2017. Advisory services were provided by UN/CEFACT experts on the UN/CEFACT reference data model. As a result of the Regional Advisor's activities and projects in Ukraine and the Eurasian Economic Union, experts from the Eurasian Economic Commission and Ukraine continue their active participation in the activities and projects of UN/CEFACT.

48. The Czech national trade facilitation body FITPRO received advisory services and support in aligning its work to the latest deliverables of UN/CEFACT and the need for

further work to implement the WTO TFA. The Czech Republic has, for years, supported a UNECE-Czech project for implementing trade facilitation in several transition economies.

49. The Regional Adviser also supports the United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA). Last year he organized the 11th meeting of the SPECA Working Group on Trade, which took place on 10 July 2017 at the WTO headquarters, back-to-back with the WTO Aid-for-Trade biannual review. The focus was on aligning work on trade liberalization and facilitation with efforts to achieve the SDGs. A list of principles for sustainable trade (i.e. trade practices aligned with the requirements of sustainable development) was drafted.

50. The Regional Adviser organized a ministerial level Economic Forum on Innovation for the SDGs in the SPECA region (Dushanbe, 5-6 December 2017) back-to-back with the 12th SPECA Governing Council session. Single Window and paperless trade projects in Central Asia figured among the innovation case studies on the agenda. The participants requested further action on eTIR[4], electronic corridors, and an overall strategy for innovation in the SPECA region.

51. UNECE's Regional Adviser has been instrumental in fostering work on the Single Window in the European Commission and the EU. He contributes to the EU Working Group on the Single Window, managed by DG TAXUD, and was invited to deliver keynote presentations at 3 meetings of the group in 2017. Notably, he contributed to defining the model of developing SW in the EU Member States. He promoted three key topics in the Working Group in 2017: data harmonization (UN/CEFACT Rec. 34 et al.); Single Window interoperability (the new Rec. 36) and the whole set of recommendations and other instruments in support of the Single Window; and participation in the revision of Rec. 33: the Single Window.

III. UNECE Executive Committee (EXCOM)

52. At its 92nd EXCOM meeting on 23 June 2017, the Chair of UN/CEFACT presented his report on the achievements in trade facilitation, e-business and the SDGs (Informal Document N°2017/26). At the meeting, the EXCOM approved the terms of Reference and mandate of the United Nations Location Codes for Trade and Transport (UN/LOCODE) Advisory Group (ECE/EX/2017/L.10) and the terms of Reference and mandate of the Team of Specialists on Sustainable Fisheries (ECE/EX/2017/L.9). It also approved the Consolidated UN/CEFACT mandate and Terms of Reference (ECE/EX/2017/L.7) to streamline and facilitate access to UN/CEFACT policies and procedures and the UN/CEFACT programme of work for 2017-2018 (ECE/EX/2017/L.8).

53. Following the establishment of the UN/CEFACT Contact Group at the 67th EXCOM session, several meetings with the UN/CEFACT Chair have been organized. The UNECE Executive Secretary organized a meeting with UNECE working party chairs on April 26, 2017. The UN/CEFACT Chair attended this meeting and provided an update of the work within UN/CEFACT. Synergies were sought between the working party chairs.

54. The 2018-2020 United Nations Budget was finalized. The UNECE Trade Facilitation Section will be able to maintain its staff, but the travel budget and consultancy budget has been reduced. This will make outreach and support services a challenge in the future, and may also put into question the organization of UN/CEFACT events outside of Geneva.

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[4] https://www.unece.org/trans/bcf/etir/welcome.html